

Terrorists' Tactics Bared

By Jim Hoagland

Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIRUT, March 13—In the wake of the Palestinian guerrilla raid on Khartoum, a shadowy profile of Black September is beginning to emerge from information that has surfaced either in their "successful" operations or from their operatives captured in their failures.

Except at the top planning level, "Black September is more a state of mind than an organization," one Western analyst of Arab affairs says.

"There is a growing community of terror, spread across the organizational structures of the Palestinians," adds another expert.

The tightly knit leadership cell is seen as drawing on the established guerrilla groups for quotas of young gunmen picked from the ranks of Palestinians traumatized by the bloody fighting in Jordan in September 1970, when King Hussein's army wiped out 3,000 to 5,000 Palestinian commandos and civilians.

The recruited groups are trained, often in Syria or Iraq, for specific missions. Only in the moments before they embark on the operation is it finally confirmed to them that they have become members of Black September. On the scene of the operation, they receive logistical support from established groups like Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The team leaders who have been captured seem to be youthful, well-educated Palestinians. The second-in-command of the Munich killings spoke English, French and German. One of the four Black September operatives who hijacked a Belgian airliner to Lod airport in Israel last May flew the plane himself. The leader of the Khartoum raid was a communications expert.

Evidence about the top Black September leadership

is still fragmentary and uncorroborated by solid information from inside the Palestinian organizations. But the Khartoum operation and the capture of a Fatah leader now said to be definitely linked to Black September by Jordanian authorities last month have provided important new clues.

Western sources normally reluctant to discuss Black September because of the scarcity of information have said this week that the man who ran the Khartoum operation from Beirut is Salah Khalef, an extremist Fatah theoretician aged about 40 and better known under his guerrilla code name of Abu Ayad.

Most Palestinian guerrillas adopt a code name that includes Abu, which means "father of" in Arabic.

Khalef denied in an interview in the Beirut newspaper L'Orient le Jour last month that he belongs to Black September. But his name has been repeatedly linked to the organization.

Abu Daoud

Jordanian intelligence accused him of being behind the November plot by a high-ranking Jordanian army officer to assassinate King Hussein. And last month, his name was mentioned in a public confession obtained from Jordanian authorities from another important Fatah leader, Mohamed Daoud Audch, also known as Abu Daoud.

Abu Daoud, said to be in his mid-30s and from Jerusalem, and 16 of his men were captured by Jordanian authorities on Feb. 8, two days before they had planned to seize the Jordanian prime minister and the Cabinet in their offices in Amman. They also apparently intended to seize the American embassy.

Black September has said that the Khartoum raid was intended as an emergency mission to save Abu Daoud and his men from execution by obtaining their release in exchange for the diplomats.

[King Hussein announced Wednesday in Amman that he was commuting the death



YASSER ARAFAT

... Fatah leader

sentences passed on Abu Daoud and 15 of his colleagues for alleged subversive activities, UPI reported. In a royal message, the king said that his decision was prompted by "sincere and honest appeals" to spare the lives of the guerrillas and "human considerations that haunted us day and night."

[The king did not make it clear whether this meant the guerrillas would be released or still have to serve prison terms.]

Fatah Cover

The guerrillas involved in the Khartoum raid were willing to give up their Fatah cover in Khartoum, alienate the Sudanese government, which had not taken a position against them, and cause Fatah to lose its main office for Africa.

All of this would indicate the importance Black September attaches to Abu Daoud. Fatah spokesmen have identified him as one of Fatah's two or three top military leaders, since he headed the powerful Palestinian militia in Jordan in 1970.

But his Black September links may be even more important. There are strong indications here from sources who cannot be identified but who have been reliable in the past that Abu Daoud was in Munich two to three

Page 1 of 2

A Shadowy Profile Of Arab Terrorists

weeks before the Munich operation, and may have helped to plan and run it.

The Palestine Liberation organization and Fatah have disputed Abu Daoud's televised confession, made before Hussein put him on trial and first confirmed the death sentence. But reliable sources here say that information extracted from the men with Abu Daoud have confirmed the major points of his confession, which fits the developing pattern of Black September operations.

Jordan Mission

About 20 Palestinians recruited for the Jordanian mission—which was, according to Abu Daoud, designed to show Hussein and the world that the guerrilla movement still existed—were trained in Iraq for two months.

Abu Daoud had special cars made up with secret, welded compartments to carry weapons into Jordan. But according to reliable sources, an informant tipped off the Jordanians, who caught most of the group traveling on Omani passports.

Other evidence of the link between the Black September organization and Fatah came today in an interview Yasser Arafat, the head of Fatah and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, allegedly gave to the Beirut weekly *As Sayyad*.

"I see nothing strange in Fatah elements joining Black September," Arafat was quoted as saying.

Interview Denied

Later tonight, the Palestinian news agency Wafa denounced the interview as "a fake and an invention that has no basis in truth," and a guerrilla spokesman said that Fatah and the PLO had no connections.

Arafat claimed in the alleged interview that "Japanese, Turks, Iranians and other strugglers" from foreign countries "have taken part in Black September operations."

"Is it strange therefore that Palestinians, even commandos from the various resistance groups, should join this organization?" asked Arafat.

If accurate, Arafat's reference to foreigners serving in Black September is especially significant since there had been no previous indication of this. The Japanese gunmen who killed 26 persons at Lod airport last May were working for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

While disclaiming his own responsibility in the Khartoum murders—two American diplomats and a Belgian envoy—Arafat significantly did not challenge Sudanese President Jaafar Nimeri's assertion of last week that Fatah's top two representatives in Khartoum had been part of the plot.

Replying to Nimeri's charge, Arafat said: "It does not concern me nor is it within my ability to stop the men of Black September from undertaking their operations."

Philosophy Unclear

Still lacking is a clear indication that Black September has a political philosophy beyond the revenge it seeks on Hussein and Israel.

Unlike the other guerrilla organizations, Black September has never mounted a single military operation inside Israel. It has dealt in international terrorism that is less visibly connected to its proclaimed goals than were the terrorist attacks by Israeli groups like the Stern Gang nearly three decades ago, or than are current guerrilla operations by groups like the Tupamaros in Uruguay or Turkish terror groups.

Predicting that he would probably be assassinated, Salah Khalef, speaking with another Fatah leader, told *L'Orient le Jour*: "We are planting the seed. Others will harvest it . . . It is enough for us now to learn, for example, in reading the *Jerusalem Post* that Mrs. Meir had to make her will before visiting Paris, or that Mr. Abba Eban had to travel with a false passport "to avoid Palestinian attacks."

"For some Arabs, this will seem only folklore. We count on them to do better" in the future.

Page 2 of 2